



# *The Three Wonderful Dresses*

Lucy Mary Jane Garnett

Turkish

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*Easy*  
*5 min read*

In the garden of a King's palace there grew a wonderful apple-tree, which every year bore three golden apples. But up to the time my story begins, neither the King nor any of his family had ever tasted the fruit of this tree. "Why do we never eat of these golden apples?" asked the three Princes of their father one day, just as the fruit was ripening.

Because,' replied the King, 'as soon as the fruit is ripe, a Monster comes on three successive nights, and every night he takes an apple.'

"If that is so," declared the youths, "we three will watch the tree in turn, and prevent the Monster taking our fruit."

"Do as you will, my sons," said the King, "and may good luck attend you."

So that same evening the eldest Prince hid himself in the garden near the apple-tree and there awaited the arrival of the Monster. As soon as the palace clock had struck midnight he heard coming nearer and nearer sounds as of heavy feet tramping across the garden beds, with snortings and growlings; and the valiant Prince, frightened out of his wits, ran away as fast as his legs could carry him.

In the morning, when his brothers asked him how he had sped with the Monster, he replied, "There was no

Monster! I watched till long past midnight, but heard and saw nothing. Belike the Monster will not come again, and we shall now ourselves taste these apples.”

But when the King went to look at the tree, lo! there were only two apples left, and all the grass and herbs all around the tree were crushed and trampled!

That night the second Prince went to keep watch; but he proved no braver than his brother; and in the morning the King found only one apple left. Well, on the third evening, it was the turn of the youngest. He, however, did not hide himself, but laid him down on the grass at the foot of the apple-tree, and waited. And the roaring of the Monster did not frighten this brave youth in the least; for, as soon as he heard the noise of his tramping, up he jumped, and before the creature could come near the tree, aimed a javelin at him, and wounded him in the eye.

Roaring frightfully, the Monster fell to the ground, but rose again and made off. The Prince, however, watched till dawn, and then, satisfied with his success, went home to bed. “Well,” asked his brothers when they met in the morning, “didst thou wound the Monster?”

“That I did,” he replied, ‘ I think I almost killed him. Take your javelins and come with me into the garden.”

The two Princes followed him with mocking laughter; but when they came to the apple-tree they saw that their brother had really had an encounter with the terrible Monster, for the ground all about was reddened with blood, a long track of which showed which way the wounded creature had gone.

“Let us follow this trail,’ said the youngest, “and we shall find out his lair. He led them out of the garden into the forest, and presently they came to a deep well, where the trail stopped. “He must have gone down this well to die,” said the eldest.

“Tie your girdles together, fasten them to mine, and so long as I call out ‘Cold, Cold!’ let me slowly down; but when I say ‘Hot, Hot!’ ‘ pull me up again as fast as you can.”

The others did as he bade them; but the eldest had hardly got half way down the well when he cried "Hot, Hot" and was drawn up again. The second Prince then offered to go down; but when he was near the bottom he, too, lost courage and cried to his brothers to pull him up.

"Let me down now," said the youngest, and when I call "Cold, Cold!" you may pull me up. "He went down, and down, and still lower down, till at last he came quite to the bottom, and there, to his great surprise, he found himself in a strange and beautiful country, with tall, shady trees, flowery meadows, and running waters. Walking about here, he presently came to a splendid palace. The door stood wide open, but there was no one to be seen, neither man nor djin. He entered a wide marble hall, and after passing through several apartments, each more magnificent than the last, he came to one in which sat three maidens as beautiful as the Angels in Paradise.

"Who art thou, stranger?" they asked him. Ladies, I am a King's son, and I am come to seek the Monster who inhabits this country."

Then thou art welcome indeed. For we are three Princesses whom he took captive. But dost thou not fear him greatly? 'I fear neither man nor djin,' replied the youth, \* and I will deliver you, or perish.'

"Listen then, brave youth. The Monster is now lying down in the chamber hard by. If his eyes are shut, he is awake, and it is all up with thee. But if his eyes be open, he sleeps. Throw then thy javelin and slay him; but beware of throwing a second, for then he would again be whole, and we should all be lost."

The Prince hastened to the chamber the Princesses pointed out, found the Monster asleep with his remaining eye open, hurled his javelin, and wounded him in this eye also.

"Listen, O man!" cried the creature as he was expiring. "If thou art mortal, throw another javelin at me, I pray thee!"

"I was born only once, I have but one life, and I deal but one blow. Die, Monster, die!"

When the Prince had made sure that the creature was really dead, he hastened with the good news to the Princesses, who, after praising his valour, led him to a table on which were dainties of all kinds, together with sweet wines and delicious fruits, and among the fruits were two golden apples which they placed before him.

When they had eaten and drunk, said the youth, addressing the two elder maidens, "Fair Princesses, when my brothers who are comely youths see you, each will, I am persuaded, desire to wed one of you. So, I beg of you to allow me to give to each of you a ring as a token of betrothal. I, being the youngest, would fain wed your youngest sister, if she desire me."

Well, the youngest Princess had already fallen in love with her handsome and heroic rescuer; and her sisters, deeming that his elder brothers could not be less worthy Princes than he, gladly consented. Having placed a ring on the hand of each, he led them out of the palace to the well-opening, at the top of which the elder Princes still waited, wondering why their brother tarried so long below. Our hero then tied the eldest Princess to the girdle which was still hanging down, called out "Cold, Cold!" and the maiden was pulled up.

The second followed, and then the youth said to the third, whom he had chosen for himself, "Now it is your turn, my beloved. Fear naught, I will follow thee to the upper world."

"Thou art my betrothed," she replied, "and I love thee. But I trust not thy brothers, and fear they may do thee an ill turn. Take, therefore, these three walnuts; each of them has within it a wonderful dress. One resembles the Sky with the Sun, Moon and Stars; another the Earth with her Trees and Flowers; and the third the Sea with its Shells and Fishes. Guard them well, for they may serve thee in time of need."

When the two elder Princesses appeared at the mouth of the well, the youths were amazed, and thought they had never seen such lovely maidens. But when the betrothed of their brother was drawn up they at once began to quarrel for her, while in the meantime the poor young Prince below was crying, "Cold, Cold!"

The others, however, took no notice, but hurried the three Princesses away to the palace, telling them that they would send men to draw up their brother, as their arms were weary and they feared to let him fall. By and by the poor youth realised that his brothers had cruelly deserted him, and that he must achieve his own deliverance.

So, leaving the well-bottom, and walking about in the country down below, he presently came upon an old gardener digging, and greeted him with "A good day to you, my good man!"

"And a good day to you, young Sir, what can I do for you?"

“I am lost in this country. Can you tell me how to find my way back to the upper world?”

“Oh, I know a very easy way. Go to the other side of that little wood, and there you will find two rams grazing together, one white as snow, the other black as night. When you are come near them, shut your eyes, seize one of the rams and mount on his back. Should you have seized the white one, he will lead you to the upper earth; while the black will take you to a land still farther away from your own. But see that you open not your eyes again until you are come to one or the other. I wish you a good journey, young Sir!”



“On the bank by sat a young maiden weeping.” Illustration by Charles Folkard, published in Ottoman Wonder Tales (1915), by Lucy Mary Jane Garnett, A and C Black, Limited.

The King’s son did as he was directed, and soon found the two rams grazing together. But, alas! it was the black ram that he got hold of, and he felt that he was being carried swiftly down into a still lower world. When he opened his eyes again he found himself on the banks of a stream which, issuing from a cleft in the rock, flowed gently through the valley, and on the bank near by sat a young maiden weeping.

“Who art thou, O lovely child?” he asked. “Alas! noble stranger, mine is a dreadful fate. A terrible Dragon has here his abode who lives on human flesh and blood. This stream is the only one in the land, and the Monster will allow none to take water from it unless a young maiden is given to him every day. Fate has so willed it that today my turn has come ; and I am waiting here until this frightful seven-headed Dragon comes to devour me.”

“And whose child art thou, fair maiden?”

“I am the King’s daughter, his only child; and my father is sorrowing in the palace, believing me, perhaps, already dead!”

“Take courage, beautiful Princess! I am valiant, and I may be able to deliver you from the Dragon.”

As he spoke, a frightful hissing noise was heard close at hand, and the Monster with seven heads now appeared from behind a rock. On catching sight of the young hero, he stopped a moment as if startled, and the Prince, seeing his opportunity, hurled a javelin straight at his heart. A torrent of flame issued from his seven terrible mouths, together with a roar that shook the hills. But that was all; and the Monster, stretching his hideous length on the grass, lay there dead.

“Farewell, my deliverer!” cried the maiden, as she hurried away, whilst the youth cut out the Dragon’s seven tongues to keep as a trophy. Then, fatigued by all his late exertions, he lay down at the foot of a tall tree and slept. Soon, however, he was awakened by the hiss of a serpent which was on the point of seizing a nestful of Eaglets perched on a branch above. With one javelin-stroke the reptile was killed as the Dragon had been, and the Prince went to sleep again.

Soon afterwards the King of the Eagles arrived to seek his young ones. Seeing a youth stretched on the ground, he swooped down to tear him with beak and claw. But the Eaglets began to cry, "Father, father, see that you do him no harm!"

"Why, my children?"

"Because he saved us from the serpent which was going to devour us!"

The King of the Eagles then spread his broad wings over the Prince and shaded him from the sun's rays until he awoke. "Young man," then said the Golden Eagle, "thou hast saved the lives of my little ones. Tell me how I can show my gratitude?"

"I deserve less gratitude than you seem to think, noble Bird," replied the Prince. "Anyone in my place would have done as much."

"Thou art a hero," I say. "Speak! What shall I do for thee?"

"Well, then, if thou art able, carry me up to my own land again. Alas! willingly would I do so; but the way is long, and with a man to carry I should die of hunger and thirst before reaching the upper earth."

"Could I not get provisions for the journey?"

"Thou couldst but I should require forty sheep and forty skins of water. Where are they to be had? The King only could furnish them!"

"Well, as I have just delivered his daughter from the Dragon, he will surely not refuse me such a gift. I will go and ask him."

"Go!" replied the Eagle, and I will await thee here."

So the Prince went into the city and inquired the way to the King's palace. All the people were rejoicing, for the news had soon spread that a hero had slain the Dragon and delivered the Princess; and heralds had been sent out to proclaim that the King would give a rich reward to his daughter's saviour. Already knights had ridden in claiming to have done the glorious deed, and after them came charcoal-burners who had found the dead

Dragon in the wood and cut off his heads. "Tis we who have slain the Monster!" cried these, "and here are his heads to prove it!"

"Nay," said the knights, how could such as you have slain him? It is we who fought with the Dragon and left him dead by the spring. The reward is ours!"

They are all telling lies,' remarked the Princess. "My saviour was a handsome young hero, no doubt a stranger."

At this moment the real Dragon-slayer entered the Council Chamber, and approached the King. "Sire,' said he, "I have killed the Dragon to whom you have hitherto paid the terrible tax of young maidens. Here are the creature's seven tongues."

As he spoke the Princess threw her arms round his neck and cried, "Yes, yes, my father! This is indeed he who slew the Dragon, and all those men are but liars and impostors."

Then the King had the knights and charcoal-burners driven out, and, embracing the young Prince affectionately, he asked him, "Dost thou desire all my treasure, or the half of my kingdom? Or wilt thou wed my daughter and be King after me?"

"Sire,' replied the hero, "I also am a King's son ; but my country is far away. I thank you for your princely offers. Your daughter is beautiful; but I am already betrothed. I will ask of you only forty sheep and forty skins of water. I require nothing more."

"If that is so, let it be as you desire," said the King ; and he gave him all he had asked for, packed on the backs of forty mules. The Prince then returned to the Eagle, and when he had loaded his back with these provisions, the King of the Birds said, "Now we will set off. When I call Crak, crak! thou must give me mutton; when I say Crouk, crouk! thou must give me water to drink ; if not I shall sink down again. Dost thou understand ? Yes ? Then get on my neck and let us start."

Well, the Eagle flew up, and up, and still higher up. Presently he cried “Crak, crak!” and the Prince gave him meat; then, “Crouk, crouk” and he gave him to drink. But the provisions were finished before they arrived at the opening which led to the upper earth. “Crak, crak! Crak, crak!” cried the Eagle once more. The youth made no reply, but, drawing his poniard, he cut a piece of flesh from his thigh and placed it in the Eagle’s beak.

“This is human flesh,” said the bird to himself, and he kept the piece under his tongue. At last, towards evening, he set down the King’s son safely on the upper earth, in the garden of the palace.

“Here you are at last! Walk now!” said the King of the Birds. But the Prince could not move, so painful was the wound in his leg. “Walk! I say,” repeated the Eagle. Then the youth confessed that, having run out of meat, he had given him a piece from his own thigh. “I knew it, and so I kept the piece under my tongue. Here it is!” and with this he put back the flesh in its proper place, and the wound immediately healed. The Eagle then took leave of the Prince and flew away back to his nest.

“What am I to do now?” thought the youth. After reflecting a little, he waited until darkness had fallen, and then, without being seen by anyone, made his way to his own chamber. There he disguised himself as a working lad and set out for the shop of the King’s tailor.

“I am a journeyman tailor,” said he, when he had saluted the master, ‘and I am in want of a job;’ ‘Thou art come in a lucky hour, my lad, for my best workman died yesterday,’ returned the tailor. ‘Go to the foreman and he will give thee work.’

So the young Prince went into the workroom, sat himself down cross-legged on the vacant board, and stitched away diligently. In the meantime his brothers did nothing but quarrel for the hand of the youngest of the three Princesses; and at length, to put an end to the dispute, the King decided that his eldest son should marry her.

“Well, said the maiden, “I will marry him, if your Majesty will give me three things as a wedding gift.”

“And what are they?” asked the King. “Oh, merely three dresses. But one must be like the Sky, with the Sun, Moon and Stars; the second like the Earth with all her Trees and Flowers ; and the third like the Sea with all the Fishes that swim in it.”

The King was rather taken aback; but all the same he promised that the Princess should have her wish. So the

Court tailor was sent for, and received the order for the three dresses. The poor man returned bewildered to his shop, wondering how in the world he would be able to accomplish such a magnificent piece of work. Day after day he pondered, and all night long he dreamed of the dresses, but they were not a bit the nearer completion. At last he came to the conclusion that the task was an impossible one for him. His new journeyman, seeing him thus pensive, one day ventured to ask what ailed him.

“My lad, the King has ordered me to make three magnificent dresses for the maiden our Prince is to marry; but my art is far below his Majesty’s requirements, and I fear that he will withdraw his patronage from me.”

And he described to the youth the fashion of the robes required of him. “Is that all?” cried the pretended journeyman, laughing; “why, ’tis but child’s play!”

“Child’s play! art mad, boy?”

“No, master, I have all my five wits about me, and, what is more, I will soon make those dresses for you. So be of good cheer, master mine.”

“Out with thee! Dost thou, who art but now out of thy ‘prenticeship, pretend to be a better workman than I the first master- craftsman of the country and the Court tailor to boot?”

“Once more, my master, I say that I can make the three dresses.”

“But when? in twenty years’ time?”

No, this night tomorrow morning they will be ready!”

“But where wilt find the stuffs?”

“I will find them, never fear. Give me only a lamp, a bottle of wine, and a basket of nuts; leave me alone in my room, and come to me tomorrow morning at sunrise.”

Well, the youth passed the night cracking his nuts and drinking his wine without troubling his head about the dresses. At early dawn came the tailor and knocked at the door. “Are the dresses ready?” he asked anxiously.

“Not quite, master mine. It is not yet sunrise.”

Then the Prince opened the three walnuts the Princess had given him, and took out of them the three marvellous robes broidered with the Sky, the Earth, and the Sea, and spread them out on his bed. “May I come in now?” asked the tailor. “Yes, master, come in, the dresses are ready!”

When the good man saw the beauty of the stuffs he was thunderstruck, and thought that either he must be dreaming, or his new workman must be one of those djins of whose magical powers he had heard in so many wonderful stories. Coming to himself, however, he took the dresses and carried them to the palace. When the Princess saw them, she asked, “Who has been able to make such beautiful robes?”

“My lady, not I, I must admit ; the credit belongs alone to a young workman of mine.”

“I should like to see this clever youth. Go and bring him to the palace.”

But when the pretended tailor was led into the presence of the Princess, what was his master’s amazement to see him, instead of humbly saluting her, take both her hands in his, and hear him say, “Is it indeed thou, my beloved one?” and to hear the Princess reply, “It is! it is! and I have waited for thee! But thy brothers..”

“Never mind my brothers! I will tell everything to my father, and he will judge justly between us.”

So they twain went to the King and told him all that had happened. And the King was so angered when he heard of the treachery of his two elder sons, that he would have killed them with his own hand had not the young couple interceded for them and begged that they might only be sent into exile. Well, now the troubles of the brave Prince were at an end, and on the very next day preparations were begun for his wedding, which was before long celebrated throughout the land with great feastings and rejoicings. This is the end of the story of the Three Wonderful Dresses.

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